

FACE INVESTIGATION

SUBJECT: Construction foreman dies after falling 3 feet from a ladder to a concrete floor.

SUMMARY:

A 70 year old white male had worked as construction foreman building a church for 6 months when he fell 3 feet from a ladder. The worker was descending the ladder when he may have lost his balance and fell to the concrete floor. Conditions were dry. There was adequate artificial lighting. He was transported immediately to a regional hospital where he died 16 hours following the fall. The Wisconsin FACE investigator concluded that, in order to prevent similar occurrences, employers should:

- ! Survey the worksite to identify hazards. All employees should then be informed of the possible hazards.
- ! Consider and address worker safety in the planning phases of projects.

INTRODUCTION:

On October 17, 1991, a 70 year old construction foreman died approximately 16 hours after a fall at work from a ladder. The Wisconsin FACE director was notified of the death on November 11, 1991 by the Department of Industry labor and Human Relations Workers Compensation Division.

Information available on this case is limited to an interview with the pastor of the church where the incident occurred, a site visit, a death certificate, and a workers compensation claim. The FACE investigator visited the site on March 24, 1992. Photographs were taken at the site.

This worker was an experienced construction worker and was safety officer on the site full time. There were no safety rules in writing that addressed this situation. The victim wore safety shoes, it appears that no other safety equipment was required or used. No one witnessed the fall although co-workers were close by. The crew consisted of 6 carpenters that had worked at this site for 6 months and that travel around the country helping build churches. Conditions were dry in the building and there was artificial lighting.

INVESTIGATION:

The victim worked for a religious organization that assisted communities in building churches. At 9:30 AM, the victim was climbing a ladder within the church structure to examine an area directly above the false ceiling. Co-workers surmise that his feet would have been about 3 feet up the ladder. No one saw the incident, co-workers heard him fall and found him on the concrete floor. They immediately called the rescue vehicle which transported him to a hospital. They surmise that the victim must have lost his balance.

CAUSE OF DEATH: Cerebral contusion, bilateral subdural hematomas, head injury.

RECOMMENDATIONS/DISCUSSION:

Recommendation #1: Employers should conduct a job site survey to identify potential hazards, implement appropriate control measures, and provide subsequent training to employees that specifically addresses all identified site hazards.

Recommendation #2: Employers should address worker safety in the planning phase of all projects.

Discussion: Worker safety issues should be discussed and incorporated into all projects during the planning stages and throughout the entire project. The planning for and incorporation of safety measures, prior to any work being performed at job sites, will help to identify potential worker hazards so that preventive measures can be implemented at the site. Given that the foreman was the victim it is difficult to determine the extent to which safety was incorporated into this work process in general. The ladder identified as the one used in the incident was appropriate for the task and in good repair.